



## ORTHOPOX VIRUS LABORATORY TESTING GUIDANCE

**Health care providers must contact their local public health department for consultation and testing approval. Specimens that test positive for orthopox virus nucleic acid are considered presumptive for an orthopox, and additional specimen(s) will be referred to the CDC for confirmatory testing.**

### Pre-approval

Evaluation and testing should be coordinated with your local health department. Patients must present firm, well circumscribed, deep-seated, and umbilicated [skin lesions associated with monkeypox](#) or other orthopox virus.

### Specimen Collection

- The following human specimens may be submitted for testing at CDPH VRDL:
  - Dry swabs of lesions, using sterile nylon, polyester, or Dacron swabs with plastic or aluminum shaft
- **More than one lesion should be sampled**, preferably from different body sites, for preliminary and confirmatory testing. 1) Vigorously swab or brush lesion with two separate sterile dry swabs; 2) Break off swabs into separate 1.5- or 2-mL screw-capped tubes with O-ring, or place each entire swab in a separate sterile container.
- Sample, label, and store each lesion separately
- Do not add or store in viral or universal transport media

### Specimen storage and shipping

- Store all specimens at 4°C if shipping within 24-72 hours; store at -80C if shipping will be delayed.
- Electronically complete one [VRDL General Purpose Specimen Submittal Form](#) for each specimen container. Handwritten forms or stickers will not be accepted.
  - Test(s) Requested: **Poxvirus PCR**
  - Disease Suspected: **Monkeypox**
  - Vaccination history: **date of smallpox (vaccinia) vaccination, if administered**
  - Clinical Findings and Symptoms: **date of rash onset**
  - Travel Information: **travel and/or exposure history**

**Send submittal form** by secure email **in advance of delivery** to [VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov); include hard copy with specimens.

- Email package tracking number to [VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov) to expedite processing.
- Ship all specimens on cold pack (2°- 8°C) or dry ice within 24 to 72 hours.
- Label outside of box with “**VRDL1**” to ensure prioritization on arrival.
- Specimens should be packed and shipped as Category B Infectious substances (UN 3373) in accordance with the U.S. [DOT](#)'s Hazardous Materials Regulations and [IATA](#) Dangerous Goods Regulations.
- Ship approved specimens and a hard copy of the completed submittal form to:

**CDPH VRDL**  
**ATTN: Specimen Receiving**  
**850 Marina Bay Parkway**  
**Richmond, CA 94804**  
**Phone: 510-307-8585**

For questions about specimen collection, submittal, or shipping, please contact the VRDL Medical and Epidemiology Liaisons (MELS) at (510) 307-8585 or [VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VRDL.submittal@cdph.ca.gov).